

**CITY OF BALTIMORE**

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**HEALTH DEPARTMENT**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Health Department Releases Quarterly Drug Intoxication Report**

Baltimore, MD (May 21, 2008) – The Health Department is releasing a quarterly report on intoxication deaths associated with drugs of abuse or alcohol. The report covers the fourth quarter of 2007 and includes totals for calendar year 2007.

Highlights of the report include:

- There were 65 intoxication deaths associated with drugs of abuse or alcohol among Baltimore City residents in the fourth quarter of 2007, one fewer than in the same quarter in 2006.
- During the 2007 calendar year, there were 235 deaths from intoxication associated with drugs of abuse or alcohol among Baltimore residents and 281 deaths resulting from intoxication that occurred in Baltimore (regardless of residence). Compared to 2006, this represents a 5% decrease in resident deaths and a 3% drop in deaths from intoxication occurring in Baltimore.
- After increasing substantially in 2006, cocaine-associated intoxication deaths among residents decreased by 22% in 2007.
- Methadone-associated deaths among residents continued to increase in 2007, rising by 21% compared to 2006.
- As in past years, heroin remains the most common substance associated with intoxication deaths, with 54% of these deaths among residents in 2007 associated with heroin.

The report concludes that death from drug intoxication remains a major public health problem in Baltimore. In response, the Health Department and Baltimore Substance Abuse Systems, Inc. are planning several steps.

The Health Department will collaborate with the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner and Baltimore Substance Abuse Systems, Inc. to review the treatment history of individuals whose deaths are associated with drug intoxication. Relevant information will be shared with treatment programs. This review could lead to shifts in substance abuse strategy and could enhance ongoing quality improvement efforts in treatment programs.

The Health Department's Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Laura Herrera, will communicate with private physicians on the appropriate use of opiate medications for pain, including methadone. Dr. Herrera will also recommend information for patients receiving methadone on the risk of overdose.

At a policy level, the Health Department will continue to support efforts developing at the state level to develop a prescription-monitoring program in Maryland.

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